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A Critique of John Hick's Multiple Incarnation: Theology and Christian Approach to Religious Dialogue

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Abstract

The question of Christ's divine nature is one issue that has caused ripples among the religions of the world. While it is the ground of Christian beliefs and explained as the doctrine of the divine incarnation of God's only Son into the world, for some people it is faith taken too far. As intellectual ink is being spilt on Christ's divine incarnation, John Hick, a theologian of great repute, argues of a multiple metaphorical incarnations that include Jesus Christ and other prophetic voices in the religious circle. This has heightened the question and the need to investigate this theological issue. Hence, this paper aims at not only denying the possibility of multiple incarnations, which would distort the entire Christian teaching but also demonstrates how Christ's incarnation is a witnessed non-metaphoric belief. For this purpose, the paper adopts descriptive phenomenology in its methodology.

Keywords: Religious pluralism, Incarnation, Truth, Salvation, Church

1. Introduction

John Hick is an internationally read and discussed philosopher of religion and theologian. He was born an Anglican, ordained a Presbyterian priest in 1953 and was excluded from the ministry in the Presbyterian Church in 1962 because of his controversial theological writings. Hick began his theological development as a conservative evangelical, who believed so much that salvation comes only through Jesus Christ. But disturbed by the salvific fate of the majority non-Christian religious people (Hick 1973, p.122) changed his theological disposition radically from a conservative evangelical to an ardent promoter of demythologized Christ and a religious pluralist.

In fact, it was his shift from Christocentric model of Christianity to a theocentric model that brought him to limelight. Actually, he was not the first to make this audacious move but his boldness and straight to the point mode of writing marked him out among his contemporaries. His personality is just like a coin made up of several sides. For Cameron (1997, p.22) he is a theologian who wears his heart on his sleeve, capable of removing the engine of an automobile in religious issues. While

for Wells (1995, p.126) he is the most provocative and bold of the pluralists. Hick's greatest contribution to religion is his sustained interest in the continuing dialogue between Christianity and the world religions. On the basis of this Hick maintains that the traditional Christian beliefs on the person and mission of Jesus Christ, especially His incarnation, are the main problems in interreligious dialogue and invariably on world peace.

This work thus studies Hick's propositions with the aim of showing that they distort core Christian belief and fan religious animosity. Hick's promotion of religious pluralism is merely an incrimination of Christianity which contradicts his set out goal of respect for all religious. In fact, inter-religious dialogue cannot be sustained at the detriment of Christians' foremost belief in Christ's incarnation which is a unique gift of God to the entire humanity. The paper would demonstrate that Christ's incarnation which Hick erroneously affirm as divisive does not negate what God is doing in the other religions but is their fulfilment.

Invariably, through hermeneutical analysis of scholarly texts the paper would demonstrate that Christian beliefs are inclusive and aim towards peaceful coexistence of all human beings. Christ's unique divine incarnation is not an event that saves Christians alone but the whole world. The necessity of Christ and his salvific mission supersedes Christianity and incorporates all that are created by God for His incarnate Son. Christianity is merely its seed.

2. Research Methodology

This paper on John Hick's multiple incarnations utilized the descriptive phenomenological method of qualitative research. This was so utilized because the ideology of John Hick presents data that were self explanatory in the realization of its findings.

3. John Hick's new 'Christology'

Intending to construct a pluralistic Christology and Christianity that would see Christ from a more objective and practical lens, Hick based his study on modern NT scholarship, scientific discoveries and "reasonable" human reasoning. He affirms that Christ is a supreme teacher and inspirer but does not consider Him, literally, a God incarnate. Christ is simply one who sought to nurture men and women from self-centredness towards a new centring in God, thus promoting not only individual but also social, national and international unselfishness; and that sees itself as one major spiritual path among others, developing friendly and co-operative relations with them (Wells 1995, p.126). This belief strengthened his resolve at the "re-Christianization" of the Christian religion and the "re-valuation" of non-Christian religions, simply as an intellectual alternative to man's acclaimed faith and nothing more.

Since the discovery of the other planets beside man's mother earth, a lot of supposed founded knowledge has gone under the carpet. The human world today is no more considered to be at the centre of the universe or the only place where life exists. Science has been developing at a geometric rate, literatures re-written, human minds confused evermore and the question that is in everybody's mouth is: what is the fate of religion, especially Christian religion that based some of its teachings on these former suppositions? What happens to the scriptural accounts that depended on these fallacious suppositions? What are the options before Christianity? Already debates are on top gear with regard to the possibility or impossibility of multiple divine incarnations in these other sister-planets. Who is saving these sister-planets?

Jettisoning the possibility and non possibility of multiple incarnations in other planets, Hick (1993, p.96-98) affirms the existence of multiple divine incarnations in the world religions. This novel approach is his Copernican revolution in the Christological camp. While affirming this thesis, he maintains that divine incarnations are possible only from the metaphorical standpoint. This is because some of the epoch-making spiritual leaders, who fall within this category, like Moses, Gautama, Confucius, Zoroaster, Socrates, Mohammed, Nanak would never have accepted to be considered in a literary sense as divine incarnations. To some, like Gautama, Confucius, and possibly, Socrates this would have been conceptually out of the question, while for others like Moses, Zoroaster, Mohammed and Nanak, it would have been blasphemous.

On the other hand, a metaphorical understanding of the term “incarnation”, which Hick said is the most appropriate way in the interpreting of the person and mission of Jesus the Nazarene, would surely include all the above named spiritual masters and many others. In fact, it gives God the freedom and opportunity to raise more holy men and women – new incarnations, who are open to His grace and dispersed all over the world as models of faith and sanctity. To arrive at this aspect of his Christology, which permits multiple metaphorical incarnations in the human world, Hick proceeded in two ways. Firstly, he contested and jettisoned Hebblethwaite's rejection of the idea of several earthly incarnations and, secondly, he used Aquinas' presumed theoretical affirmations of a possible multiple incarnations as his footnote. Rejecting the idea of multiple incarnations, in the world, Hebblethwaite (1987, p.189) affirms that:

If God Himself, in one of the modes of His being, has come into our world in person, to make Himself personally known and to make Himself vulnerable to the world's evil, in order to win our love and bind us to Himself, we cannot suppose that He might have done so more than once. For, only one man can actually be God to us, if God Himself is one. We are to posit relation in God, yes, but not a split personality. Only one actual human person can be the vehicle and expression of the one God on earth.

This argument that “only one man can actually be God to us, if God Himself is one” is a *non sequitur* for Hick. It does not follow logically and does not allow God the space to be God. Consequently, Hick (1993, p.91) asked the following questions:

Does the divine uniqueness prevent God from being in personal relationship with any number of human beings at once? Do not many people throughout the world simultaneously experience the personal presence of the one God? Why then is it in principle impossible for God to assume human nature on several occasions, revealing the divine nature to different sections of the human race, and becoming vulnerable to the world's evil in order to win the love and allegiance of people within those different groups?

Multiple metaphorical incarnations, at the same time and in the same world, have nothing to do with the personal or impersonal relationship with the Godhead because God is capable of being in a multiple simultaneous relationship with human beings and the whole world. “If the Holy Trinity wanted, in one or other of its persons, to become incarnate on earth more than once, it would be within the Deity's power to do this” (Hick 1993, p.97). With these, Hick faulted Hebblethwaite's argument as untenable and the expression of Christianity's fear over losing her absolute claim and possession of God evidenced in the belief in one God, one religion, one saviour and one salvation for all.

Finally, Thomas Aquinas, Hick attempted a theological *coup d'état* on Christianity. Aquinas had questioned whether the divine Son might subsequently become incarnate as another different human being. He responded to this question by saying that after the incarnation, the Son has the power to take up another human nature distinct from the one He actually did. Besides, the human nature actually assumed a divine person could take up another numerically distinct. Hick interpreted, and of course misinterpreted Aquinas by saying that, the above statement means that the Second Person of the Trinity could take human nature again outside of Christianity and among the other world religions as many times as He deems necessary. In fact, he supposed that the incarnation of Jesus of Nazareth could not have been the first in human history and, as such, not unique and can be repeated (Hick 1993, p.93). Furthermore, Hick agreed with Aquinas on the impossibility of all human beings becoming God incarnates. The hypothesis of a universal incarnation, in which every human being is God incarnate, will result in the end of the human race. At the same time, he rejected the other reason proffered by Aquinas for this impossibility, which is that such universal incarnation will take away the glory from Jesus Christ.

Hick opted for a limited number of incarnations with different messages for different people of different races, cultures and languages as in contemporary times. In essence, this is what almost all the different world religions represent for so many people. Such arrangement offers metaphorically incarnated divine persons, in their localities, the opportunity to engage in various and diverse missions like teaching the true way of life, bringing many to accept God's rule in their hearts,

purifying nations, healing the sick and possibly undergoing persecutions and martyrdom. Without exaggeration, the unimaginable image of God shines purest and become more evident in this world in this picture. Definitely, it would also lead to: "A theology of religions which stresses the infinite nature of the Godhead, exceeding the scope of all our concepts, and the salvific efficacy of the variety of ways formed around the different incarnations that have occurred throughout human history" (Hick 1993, p.98).

4. Multiple Truths

The support for the multiple metaphorical divine incarnates that mediate salvation to different human beings differently is based on the question of truth. The question of truth is as old as human history itself. According to Bordoni (in Serretti (ed.) 2004, p.39) it is one root of the challenges to the uniqueness of Christianity posed by the so-called theocentric pluralism. The question comes in different forms like: What is the truth? Where is the truth? Is truth one or multiple? The last question is of utmost interest here because, if affirmation is given to Hick that God is one for all the religions, that all religions are valid avenues for human salvation and are embodiments of divine incarnations, one is forced to ask why they conceive God differently and have divergent doctrines that are mostly contradictory to one another.

In the thoughts of Hick, God, the ultimate transcendent reality is beyond the scope of human concepts. He cannot be directly experienced by man as it is in itself but only as it appears in terms of the various human thought-forms (Hick 1993, p.140). In this way, God is likened to the Kantian *noumenon* – the being in itself, which cannot be completely understood or explained. The variant religions are, thus, nothing but distinctive expressions of the ever encompassing God. They see Him as Yahweh, or as the Holy Trinity, or Allah, or Shiva, or Vishnu, or as Brahman, or the Dharmakaya, Sunyata, the Tao, *Chukwu* and so on. All these reflect the one reality, which no human language whether inspired or not is adequate enough to totally express or exhaust its reality.

In today's religious pluralism, every religion can say that it is unique because it represents in an unrepeatable manner the reception of the divine reality. It can also consider itself absolute because of its adherents' absolute choice and dedication of life. But it would not surely be absolute if it excludes others – just because they are diverse from the truth. On the contrary, it can be so, only according to the measure with which it relates with others in a continuous authentic dialogue. Paradoxically, the more a religion is opened to the truth of the other religions, the more it receives the absolute and universal characters. This is the reason why in Islam the Quran affirms of God that "No eyes can penetrate Him" and that God is "beyond what they describe" (6.103 and 37.80). The Kena Upanishad declares of Brahman, "There the eye goes not, speech goes not, nor the mind" (Radhakrishnan 1953, p.582), and Shankara wrote that Brahman is that "before which words recoil, and to which no understanding has ever attained" (Otto 1932, p.28). In Anselm's formula, God is not only "that than which a greater cannot be thought" but also "greater than can be thought". We can, unequivocally, say that God is the mystery which transcends all religions and revelations. All religious truths about God are not singularly absolute but complementary to one another because at the end, the truth of God remains a mystery as far as God remains God.

In line with the universal call for tolerance among the world religions, Hick affirms that no particular religion has the monopoly of truth, especially as it concerns God, because it is practically impossible. No religious tradition should claim absolute sole salvific efficacy of its tradition. No religion embodies the whole truth that can save humanity of different races, times and cultures. While particular religions articulate specific salvific means that works out for them, other traditions should not be relegated to the background. At most, they should all team up to save humanity and the earth from immorality and selfishness. As a result of this, no religion should or has the right to define the actual relationship of other religions with God based on her own relationship. There should be no subjecting or subordinating of the faith of others to one's own faith, because, so far as one can see there is no definite absolute truth in any particular religion. More so, one can see going on to a more or less equal extent, salvific transformation of human existence, within all the great traditions. What man has is a multiple complementary truths among the world religions.

5. Religions as Paths of Salvation

By subscribing to the thesis of multiple metaphorical divine incarnations, Hick paved the way for affirming that all the religions are paths of salvation. In fact, salvation is at the basis of all religions and the multiple divine incarnations. All the religions acknowledge that man is imperfect, has not reached its highest point in perfection and, thus, must be saved. To help man ascend and extricate himself from his "earthly throw-ness and fallen-ness" into a life of bliss, the religions and the multiple divine incarnations are inevitable and they can do so only in those context that the individual believer knows and is at home with. For this, Hick (1991, p.135) opines that:

Each tradition conceptualizes in its own way the wrongness of ordinary human existence – as a state of fallen-ness from paradisaal virtue and happiness; or as a condition of moral weakness and alienation from God; or as the fragmentation of the infinite One into false finite individualities; or as a self-centredness which pervasively poisons our involvement in the world process making it to us an experience of anxious, unhappy un-fulfilment.

At the same, each religion depending on how she views the ultimately Real and human existence proffers a salvific solution to this collective guilt. For example, Christianity sees salvation as forgiveness from sin. God forgives the sins of men because Jesus atoned for these sins with His death on the Cross and men appertain to His body – the Church. Definitely, for Hick, it does not matter so much the concept or name used to denote this salvation for humanity, what is important is that all religions are interested in changing the fate of man. Though, the concept or name may differ, the lowest common factor and unifying principle among them all is that man changes for the better in relation to the ultimately Real and in relation to the created nature, especially fellow men. White (1991, p.54) supported this view, which he believes runs through all the religions as "dying to self and living to God. It requires a turning away from all self-centredness which excludes others, and freely relating with love, worship, and respect to God, humankind, and our environment, in due proportion".

This understanding of salvation, when considered within the perspective of religious pluralism, means the transformation of human existence from self-centredness to a new orientation centred in the divine Reality. It is a salvation that is within the scope of man and achievable in the everyday life. The Sacred Books of the religions contain the precepts to this radical transformation in man, which has produced saints, people not different from the rest of us but simply much more advanced in the process of inner transformation. They are persons who are open to the Transcendent, so as to be largely free from self-regarding concerns and anxieties and empowered to live as an instrument of God/Truth/Reality (Hick 1991, p.136-137).

Since this is the essence and experience of the different religions as paths of salvation, Hick categorically states that we have no good reason to believe that any one of the great religious traditions has shown itself to be more productive of love/compassion than another. On the other hand, if one is to investigate on all the evils perpetrated in the name of religion and by religious people within all the religious traditions, we are not in a position to claim an over-all moral superiority for any one of the great living religious traditions. The evidences point to the fact that salvation is a world-wide process and, in fact, an unfinished process, that today, no religion – not even Christianity has proved beyond every reasonable doubt to be the sole possessor of salvation. Hence, there is no good reason to ascribe salvation to any one religion alone or say that anyone of the religious traditions is more salvific than others.

6. Hick and Christ's Incarnation as a Metaphor

With the conviction that Christ's divine incarnation, with its chained consequences hold back authentic interreligious dialogue and the true meaning of salvation, Hick vehemently insisted that Jesus' incarnation is metaphorical. To buttress this, he affirmed that Christ Himself did not teach what was to become the orthodox understanding of Him; that the dogma that He had both a divine and a human nature is incoherent and unintelligible; that divine incarnation is a metaphorical idea; that its literal construal makes Christianity the only religion to have been founded by God in person,

and thus uniquely superior to all others, a belief which has done much harm to the world; that instead Christians should take Jesus as the one who has made God real to man and challenged man to live in God's presence.

Hick's method for arriving at this conclusion is grossly erroneous and manipulative, in the sense, that he employed negative eclecticism in his choice of materials for this thesis. He was literally at war with the Sacred Scripture, which he considered more or less a piece of literary work than a "faith-built" source. The disregard for the Sacred Scripture streams from Hick's employment of the scientific critical method, that is, the use of historical critical exegesis and the theory of evolution in reading the Scripture. Hick, merely, adopted the findings of liberal modern New Testament scholarship to the neglect of other modern attempts by F. F. Bruce, I.H. Marshall, C. Blomberg and many others, who sufficiently proved the historical reliability of the NT accounts.

To judge the veracity of a religious claim based on verifiable scientific data is to fire blank and miss the point. Religion deals with mystery and faith. Unlike objects of scientific investigations, which are material substances, religious matters are mostly spiritual. They transcend what we can see and touch with the eyes and hands respectively. Furthermore, to quiz religion with science is to fall headlong into the fallacy of presuming that scientism alone can lead us to truth. But science depends upon faith, intuition, and aesthetic vision as well as on reason (Armstrong 2009, p.309).

Furthermore, on a daily basis, one witnesses the failures and lies of science in all facets of life. Its decadence shows that science, in its ephemeral nature, is not waterproof and absolute. The so-called scientific analysis and precisions are not eternal but always changing with the change of time. All these give the impression that science does not hold the key to the truth. Even Scientists are invariance with the results from their researches and, often, they do criticise one another on issues that touch human origin and development, of which religion is an integral part. If science has not proved itself infallible, how sure are we, then, that it can play the judge in a discourse that goes beyond material substance? Is there any certainty that what science is giving man today as indelible truths, especially as it concerns the historicity and non-historicity of Christ and his event will not be counteracted by another scientific investigation tomorrow? It is on this note that Hick's usage of science to oppose the incarnation of Jesus Christ is regarded as unfounded and a mere rhetoric.

Hick disregarded the unquestionable unity between Christian tradition and the Scripture. He mentioned that none of the NT writers was an eye-witness of the life they depicted. That the Gospels are secondary and tertiary portraits dependent on oral and written traditions which had developed over a number of decades, the original first-hand memories of Jesus being variously preserved, winnowed, developed, distorted, magnified and overlaid through the interplay of many factors (Hick 1991, p.16). From reliable sources, we know that though Mark and Luke were not eye-witnesses to the event they discussed, Mathew and John were. External evidences dated from the late second century claimed unanimously that John, the son of Zebedee and one of the apostles of Jesus Christ, wrote the Fourth Gospel and the three epistles of John (Carson 1991, p.23-29). Even this too is contested by some scholars, today.

But then, that some NT writers were not eyewitnesses to the event they wrote does not mean that their work is the fruit of human genius and thus, fraudulent. Some of them, like Luke, did not hide this truth. Luke, freely, from the beginning informed Theophilus that his gospel account is the fruit of an accurate investigation made from eyewitnesses (cf. Lk. 1:1-4). Though, he was not a direct witness of Jesus' event, such does not in any way make his account less important or an unreliable historical piece. Hick tends to forget that in most ancient cultures, it is the oral culture that was prevalent. A historical fact communicated orally and, later, put into writing after a thousand years, runs no risk of falsification if the authors are trustworthy and have strong oppositions who can counteract what they wrote.

The fact remains that what the NT writers wrote were central for the first Christian community and, thus, they could not have been easily falsified. In fact, what has endured for many centuries of Christian history can hardly become meaningless for today's people. The "Christ" that Hick proposed, with his misinterpretation of the Scripture, is a "Christ" that Christian ancestors in the faith would hardly recognize. Hick's metaphorical "Christ" is not the Christ of the Christian ancestors, which they lived and historically transmitted to others. In view of this, one can say that it

is Hick, who is falsifying the faith in Jesus Christ and not the NT writers.

That Jesus' humanity was affirmed first before His divinity in relation to the resurrection (cf. Acts 2:22,32,36 and Rm 1:3-4) by some NT writers does not mean that there was a contradiction or confusion in the apprehension of the person of Jesus Christ as Hick presumed. Instead, such narrations say so much about the NT writers and their work. First, the seeming conflict in their narration shows that the NT writers were not out to falsify their accounts. They freely relayed the reality, the way they saw it. What does this mean? It means primarily that they did not hide knowing Jesus of Nazareth as a man like them. In fact, they recognized Him as one of them. He ate, drank and journeyed with them. He expressed signs of fatigue and need for human company. For them, He was truly a man with divine mission for the people; that was why they followed Him and sought for His teachings. But as divine revelation continued and their faith increased, in Pauline language, as they were fed not with liquid food but solid spiritual food, they understood the other aspect of their master's life, His divinity. Christ's transfiguration, walking on the sea, healing of the sick and, finally, His resurrection from the death, were all the disciples needed to understand all that their master has been affirming of Himself in relation to being the Son of God, God Son and the same with God. The NT writers sincerely presented the path their faith took. It was not an easy path but one that brought them face to face with the hidden mystery or knowledge of old –the knowledge which holy people of all ages sought for but could not get because it is a pure gift from God.

The incarnation of Jesus Christ was considered a precious gift and that was why Christian ancestors, though, they did not fully understand it, were able to conserve and transmit it to others. In showing appreciation to God for the gift received, they started the worship of Christ that has reached humanity today. Really, it was not the Councils of Nicene and Chalcedon that started the worship of Christ but the early Christians, who owed their conscience that duty of professing and living what they have seen with their own eyes. For this, even if the Chalcedonian metaphysical formulation of the truth of Jesus Christ's dual nature fails, as all human knowledge is bound to fail with time and development, the truth of this divine revelation is not likely to fail. It will withstand all imaginable storms. Surely, it will not fade away because it is not dependent on Chalcedon or man but on God. It is a lived faith, witnessed and narrated in the scripture for posterity.

The incarnation of God must not be metaphorical if God's intention for humanity must be taken seriously. Divine incarnation and redemption (salvation) are two sides of the same coin. They remind man of the policy of Rolls Royce: the only place in which a Rolls automobile can be repaired is in the factory where it was made. Similarly, Christ's incarnation is about re-creation and redemption. He who has always been and involved in creation, is the one who can re-create and redeem it. Only He – to whom creation was made for, can truly give His life for it. This excludes all the metaphorically enumerated "divine-incarnations" by Hick. Where does a part of a whole stand, in order, to redeem the whole? The grace of salvation is a gift above man and not intra-man. Hence, Edwards states that the affirmations that Christians make about Jesus Christ are not intended to create a faith but to explicate a faith; not to enhance the historical Jesus but to stand in continuity with the historical Jesus (Hick 1991, p.69).

Hick, in order to substantiate that Christ is not the only saviour of the world, quoted Aquinas on the possibility of multiple incarnations in the world. The recourse to *argumentum ad auctoritatem* does not really serve here because in theology, logic, as well as any other human endeavour, possibilities amount to nothing. The admonition of Walter Kasper (1977, p.192) comes handy. He was very prompt in cautioning against every theology of possibilities based on what God might have done because they do not always reflect the mind and will of God. If there are other incarnations of God at the same time and in different places would they be able to recognize themselves without division, contradiction and confusion? Would they be able to conform to the person and teachings of Jesus Christ and His salvation?

Multiple incarnations, in whatever form one tends to see them, are impossible. Salvation does not only mean a return to paradise but also the conservation and maintenance of creation. The first human beings failed in this duty. It would then amount to foolhardy if a mere man, whether he is a prophet, an evangelist or a "guru" to be given the responsibility again. It is reasonable and more acceptable that the Creator send His own Son –true man and true God –to save His hand work. Jesus Christ was very emphatic in warning His disciples not to be deceived by those who would

come, in His name, saying, "I am the Messiah" (cf. Mt 24:5). In the same way, He informed them that all those who came before Him were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them (cf. Jn 10:8). To further cement His claim to "uniqueness and universality" of salvation, Jesus affirmed unequivocally that He is "the way, the truth and the life" (Jn. 14:6). These are clear pointers to His divine incarnation and the salvation that follows it.

Coming to the question of salvation, which Hick believes that the Christian religion has usurped based on her teaching of the uniqueness and universality of salvation in Jesus Christ, it is good to note out-rightly that salvation is not just about personal and worldly transformations as Hick thought. That atheists are morally good, the world economy booming and the world government able to provide good housing, medical services, dignified works and quality education for all do not mean that salvation has come and that the worldly saviour has finally arrived.

Salvation is more than just living comfortably and painlessly. For, in man, there is this natural desire to transcend himself and his world because man knows that his true ambient is boundless and timeless, that is eternity. The glories of the world cannot satisfy this desire neither can man on his own arrive at it. No man, no matter how spiritually he is placed in the hierarchy of religious affairs can do it for himself or for others. Salvation entails that gift which only God can give to His people; that unique vocation among His people to be like Him and live eternally. The vocation to eternity, which is equal and the same for all humanity united in God. Since, this vocation (salvation) cannot be different for different people and cannot have different saviours for different people for that would amount to division in the human race, salvation is only through Christ, who died and was raised up for all that humanity can achieve this vocation to eternity (Ladaria 2008, p.68), to participate in the divine life of the Trinitarian God.

7. Conclusion

Once again, it is vintage Hick – always well written, often well-argued, but rather wrong. Hick kept the religious question on salvation alive by questioning the dual nature of Jesus Christ, but the question of religious pluralism and interreligious dialogue should be done in a temperate mood and not under bias and polemics.

At the root of Hick's 'new Christology' is the lack of *credo ecclesiam*, which happens to be an essential ingredient in Christian faith. That it seems one cannot spell out meaningfully the relationship between Jesus' humanity and His deity, His death on the cross and its salvific effects intelligibly, as Hick he supposed, shows that man is not dealing with an empirical subject alone but a matter of faith. It is not the scope of religion to explain in human terms its faith-beliefs. To attempt such is to humanize religion. Human intellect and its explanations cannot always penetrate and dissemble faith issues and human mind and reasoning do not contradict faith but show that men are limited as human beings in all facets of life independent of the progress man makes in this world.

Definitely, man would keep missing the target, as Hick did, if he does not appreciate first the Church – the custodian of God's eternal gifts to man. If man does not understand his faith as the cause of his joy and well being, as intended by the apostles and other disciples of Christ, who as close associates of Christ, wished that their joy may be the world's joy and that this joy may be complete in the Lord. Surely, man would never go far in the search for the truth and happiness that save.

Finally, Hick has truly challenged every Christian theologian, pastor and informed lay people, with his "new Christology" that is Trinity denying, into being always wary of all unorthodox Christian teachings in whatever form and pretence they may appear. At the same time, to present the doctrines of man's faith in an attractive, accessible way, in order, to enable fellow Christians, especially those who are not opportune to follow the intricacies of the faith in an academic environment, to keep abreast with the latest discussions and new insights.

With regards to non Christians, man must always be in dialogue of respect with them without losing sight of man's rich religious heritage. It is not true that man cannot relate with them very well and, at the same time, practice and propagate man's faith jealously. Man must not be afraid to offer to all humanity the God incarnate – Jesus Christ, for He is not only "true God" but also the perfect

man. In Him –the unique, universal saviour of the world, man can courageously overcome the terror of mortality in all its ramifications. While doing all these, it is paramount to have as man's theological cum pastoral caveat the admonition of Paul, who said that if anyone proclaims another "Jesus" apart from the Jesus of the gospel that such a person is like the serpent who deceived Eve, luring her away from life to death (cf. 2 Cor. 11: 3-4).

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